Share of POL in imports

26. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what had been the growth in imports during 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(b) what had been the share of POL in these imports; and

(c) the growth in imports during the first six months of 1999-2000 and share of POL in total imports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S) data, the growth in imports in dollar terms has been as follows:—

	Import growth rate (%)
1997-98	6.0
1998-99*	7.9

*Provisional

(b) The Share of POL in these imports in 1997-98 is 19.7% and that in 1998-99 is 14.0%.

(c) As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S) provisional data, the growth in imports in dollar terms during the first six months of 1999-2000 is 5.6% and share of POL in total imports is 19.8%.

Export A National Priority

27. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that export is a national priority and this sector would be unshakled from bureaucratic control;

(b) if so, what steps are being taken by Government to ensure this; and

(c) since when will these steps be effective?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and some sector specific measures such as extension of zero duty EPCG scheme to textile sector and certain sub sectors of chemicals, exemption from additional customs duty under zero duty EPCG scheme for marine and software sector, rationalisation of EOU/EPZ scheme and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. Most of the steps have already become effective.

Privatisation of Tea Gardens

28. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan to revive all the five tea gardens of ailing public sector unit Tea Trading Corporation of India;

(b) whether Government have any plan to privatise these tea gardens; and

(c) if so, the details mereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Tea Trading Corporation of India (TTCI), a wholly owned subsidiary of STC, is facing an acute financial crunch being a lose making company and has been unable to discharge its obligation. The total liability of the Company is estimated around Rs. 36 crores as on 31.1.1997.

TTCI management has filed a petition in the Calcutta High Court for liquidation of the company. The case is now pending in the Court.

Patenting of Vegetables

29. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that "Karela", "Jamun and Brinjal" have been patented in USA (vide the Times of India dt. 15.7.99);